

The Promethean

The literary journal of Concordia University-Portland, Oregon

Fall/Winter 2002

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 TABLE OF CONTENTS

ON SEEING THE LION ENTER NOAH'S ARK	4	BRIAN BLUMS
MIDDLE BROTHER	5	BRIAN BLUMS
A BOAT RIDE TO CAYE CAULKER	6	JON DIETZEN
DEFLOWERED	8	ANNE WOODWARD
MY MOTHER'S PAIN	9	KATIE MARTEL
FOR THE COUPLE WHO LET US PASS BY ON THE INSIDE	10	KATIE MARTEL
WINTER	11	TIM WINTERSTEIN
THANKS FOR THE GIFTS: REFLECTIONS OF THE EVALUATOR OF THE ESSAYS	14	HERB HOEFER
IT IS DEFINED AS A LACK OF EMOTIONAL RESPONSE FIRST PLACE WINNER	15	KATIE MARTEL
A BRIGHTER AFTERMATH SECOND PLACE WINNER	17	ALISON PIRIE
THUMBS UP (TO THIRD WORLD UPRISING – A PROGRESSION UNDONE)	19	MATT REICHART
DOES GOD HAVE WORDS FOR THIS	20	NICOLE SLACK
WHAT UNIVERSITY	21	BENNETT TRACY HUFFMAN
THE SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY	23	DANIEL WRIGHT
ESSENTIALLY NOTHING	26	NATE BACA
SUMMER STILL-LIFE	27	TIM WINTERSTEIN
TWO ASTRINGENT FRIENDS	28	JENNIFER SMITH
THE UPPER HOUSE	29	JENNIFER SMITH

COVER ART: "HOUSE OF GOD" BY LEIGH-ANNE STOHL

 FORWARD

This issue of the PROMETHEAN marks several changes in the journal's look and mission. In keeping with the convention of many literary journals, we have moved to a half-page format and standardized our layout so that the focus is on the written words our contributors have shared. The decision to feature artwork only on the cover was difficult, and we hope that our planned website will provide students with an opportunity to share their talents on-line. We are also featuring, in this issue and in forthcoming fall/winter issues, the winners of our themed essay contest. This fall the contest asked writers to respond to the events of September 11. Our judge, Dr. Herbert Hoefler, read the entrants, selected a first and second place winner and shared his perspectives on the contributions. We are grateful for his expertise as reader and appreciate deeply his commitment to literary excellence at Concordia.

Our mission, however, has remained largely the same but with an eye toward expanding the journal's readership beyond the campus community. We see our role as the journal of literary arts at Concordia University, Portland. As such we seek to publish the best in serious poetry, fiction, and essays from members of the Concordia community, including students, staff, faculty, and alumni. The journal will also largely remain a student created text, with student editors playing a large role in decisions about content and production.

We hope these changes will benefit the readers and writers for the PROMETHEAN, and we welcome suggestions and contributions to the journal.

Lynnell Edwards
Faculty advisor, PROMETHEAN

ON SEEING THE LION ENTER NOAH'S ARK

BRIAN BLUMS

Lashed to this jumble, this throng, this motley
Procession of cowardly grazers and groveling cattle,
You alone stare angry and defiant at my delicate man
Flesh.

You, proud sovereign lord of beasts, are now forced to march
Good soldier two and two under the dark and doomed
Trees, into the cold belly of an old man's ridiculous boat;
Into the preposterous ark of a white-bearded knock-kneed
Wino.

Fierce guardian of the lusty black earth, of the sacred
Ground, of rich fecundity ever waxing in the absence of man's
Invading footsteps, you have known no sin yet are castigated
By *He* who is not of your image—once tawny warrior-king of
The dry and buzzing golden grasses what has *He* done to
You?

He has made you tame; *He*, almighty God, has left you
Weak-kneed and toothless conquered that *He*, oh angry
Hebrew God, may flood the Earth and murder his willful
Children.

MIDDLE BROTHER

BRIAN BLUMS

You were fooled all those years ago
When the gossamer sight of the unfolding leaf
And the light promise of the sunny sparrow
Lulled you into believing you could not be
Buried in the newly thawed ground.

A BOAT RIDE TO CAYE CAULKER

JON DIETZEN

He's been here a thousand times before.
And he sits, in contrast to the bleached white
boat with his eyes closed as the winds of home
beat against his face.
And he is still.

We slap against the boat. Whooping and gawking
at the beauty surrounding us.
With every jolt of the waves...a scream.
With every new sight...a gasp
or an awe.

He's been shopping in the city today.
Taking home with him
a small stereo, a juicer, some black
& white roll-on tile for his kitchen floor.
A few possessions he will prize and
put through use the rest of his life.

And we stagger with the waves.
Pulling out our one-time use this, and
protection crème that. And
it is good that we are here.
Only for us, we are different.
Yet we sit with the boat.

His eyes slowly open with a
smile when one of us lets
out a scream of an unknown thing we've never
seen before.
We see it only through our difference-
And I bet he doesn't even need to open his eyes to
see what we are yelling to each other about.
But he does...

and he smiles.

And as the boat comes to rest in Caye Caulker,
he gets off with the remnants of that peaceful smile,
he nods to us,
as our sunburnt faces
wish him a good day...

He is a little ahead of us as he crosses the dock, but I hope
we will join him on the island.

DEFLOWERED

ANNE WOODWARD

He is torn from the thorax of a butterfly landing as gentle as breath;
leaves the other three useless wings behind,
Flees on the wind of her cherry mouth from his life-long home,
the balding head of a late summer dandelion,
Finds himself pinched between soft pink fingers with innocently
polished fingernails;
joins the odd number of the scattered white apostrophes
of the "he loves me" pile,
Soaks in the rain that pounds the brown of his chlorophyllless body into
the sidewalk,
Has lost an innocence that she cannot appreciate.

MY MOTHER'S PAIN

KATIE MARTEL

there remain remnants of
a father who did not love.
a mother who died too soon.
a sister, two, three
who were placed so far above her
the pretty one. the popular one. daddy's favorite,
wrapped around his fingers,
cutting off the blood.
my mother, third from last,
(though indeed last in daddy's eyes)
the fat one, the stupid one, the never beautiful one.
drugs and beer and stringy tears pooling on her cheeks.
grubby hands, clutching grubby heart, skirt, fat, folds.
tears until 20 years ago, and even now
i see the faint remains of
smeared tears across a beautiful face.

historically speaking she was
a woman of body and breast,
a child of mind and heart.
she grew up mind you.

FOR THE COUPLE WHO LET US PASS BY ON THE OUTSIDE
KATIE MARTEL

old woman passes by, creased like a
balled up piece of paper, held in Time's
sieve like fist.

old man with smile bright, giving
helping hand to she whom he has
slept with,
loved with,
wept with,
these some 47 years.

i walk past; watching with
simple, idle, childish indifference,
masked curiosity and astonishment.

hand in shriveled hand, another hand on walker,
the last hanging limply.
varicose veins, celluloid, and a bald spot.
brown stained, cracked dentures.
two minds turned soft due to
senility and too much ache for the span
of their two lives.

and in spite of the image in the mirror.
despite the tender pains.
they walk on.

and i wonder,
is this what love is?

I picked up the phone and she said, "Hi."

"Hi, how are you?" I asked, recognizing her voice.

And then she said, "I'm leaving now. I've got to go get gas and then I'll
come over," her voice anticipatory and out of breath.

I said, simply and inarticulately, "Okay."

I put down the receiver, my stomach falling along with my hand towards
the cradle. The only sound was the hum of the heater floating somewhere in the
room. I knew for sure that I would never hear the sound of her sweet, beautiful
voice again.

And I felt I needed to write it down. As the words fell over the page,
sprawling inelegantly, I felt them damning me, and, as if by the very writing, damning
her too. Damning her never to reach my house; damning her voice to silence. And
my face flushed with those thoughts.

There is a nothingness that is a person's car trip, even across town. At
first, only a voice on the phone, speaking words of expectation as to when she will
arrive at your house. And from that point until you actually hear the knock, once
or twice, and open the door to reveal a smiling face, she is lost in the nothingness
of which only she is aware. You cannot see her driving along the highway in the
soft, silently falling snow; you do not see the unsmiling, though not unhappy, face.
Who knows of her actual existence in that exact moment except perhaps God?
The other people in their cars, themselves lost in white nothingness, do not know
her. To them she is just another car driving alongside, but meaning no more or less
to them than they to her.

And it only changes when the car, no, the *person* in the car next to her
forgets to check the blind spot on his left and changes lanes only to hear that
crunch of metal, possibly a horn if she is fast enough, that foretells disaster. Only
then are they more than cars traveling on the same road on the same wet night.
Only then does the nothingness burst apart and become flashes of sparks as her
car screeches and scrapes along the cement divider, itself already marred by the
black lines of past disasters. The nothingness becomes flesh and blood, metal and
glass and plastic, light and darkness; brash, arrogant color carelessly splashed across
a canvas of black night and white snow. Then the nothingness is neatly fragmented
into police cars, newspaper and television spots, funeral(s), tears and grief. Only
then do I realize that she will not come. I will not hear her soft, low voice say that
one word, "Hi," as it did on the phone a moment ago, drawn out and cut short at
the same time. I will not see her eyes sparkle with some hidden, inward light when
she sees me, loving something I can't quite see in myself. I will not hear her say, "I
do," before "God and these witnesses."

And then the words of a hidden book present themselves: "How can

dust and ashes be proud?" What right do we have to assume we have anything to contribute? That we have brightened someone's day. Or made life more enjoyable for family or friends or strangers. That we have created or destroyed; made or broken; done or left undone; loved or left unloved. Let no one be mistaken: God will not be mocked. The harvester will reap what he has sown.

I sit at the desk in my cold, dark room, head resting in hands. Suffocating worry grabs and almost chokes me. That is the feeling, the feeling of complete helplessness, that drives many to suicide. Who wants to live in a world where one cannot control the environment or circumstances or what will happen to loved ones? We all know that it is not possible, yet at certain times we are still driven into that deepest despair, which is not so far removed from hope. This waiting causes me to pace the room, speaking curses intertwined with prayers. I grab my hair and furiously rub my scalp back and forth, as if trying to clear my head of the cobwebs that 3:00 a.m. brings. Now, lying on the ground as still as possible with shut eyes, I stare into the darkness that lies, unknown to her, behind my eyelids. Cold air flows freely in through the open window, pausing only to brush its airy filaments across forehead and face, trying to find its way inside my skull. But I will not allow it to enter, and that thought causes me to shiver. Shaking loose of these exhaustion-induced imaginings, I stand again and return to the wooden chair at my desk and lean it back against the ugly couch that sits against the wall. Glancing at the yellow glow of the numbers on the clock radio, I see not 3:00 a.m. as I had imagined, but only 8:23 p.m.

This reminds me of times that I fall asleep during the early evening. Those are the times when I wake up in a sweat at 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. and, thinking it is really 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning, I throw the sheet and blanket off and jump out of bed, heart beating faster than it should. Trying to remember where I left my clothes—drawer or floor?—I realize, with relief, that it is really night and I do not have to get ready for the day.

I wonder, then, if introspection is more a curse than a blessing, always analyzing one's unseen self, as if under a microscope, to find what may or may not be there. Is it always something truly unknown that is found? Another facet of the diamond, so to speak? Maybe not a diamond but an agate, rough and knobby—until it is cut and, bleeding, it reveals its beauty. But maybe it is nothing more than a piece of charcoal that is found, having written black obscenities on whitewashed walls that only remain until the next rainfall.

Winter has come and it is winter that causes this surreality to descend. It rarely snows here, but it is not abnormal for the bitter cold to take control of the ground like some ancient warlord, merciless. The ignorant wind will blow through the trees and continue on its lonely path, tossing stray paper and fallen leaves across the street.

Winter is a strange time; it consists of hard liquor and cigarettes, of divorce and adultery. These are romantic in their darkness, like great adventures and great wars are romantic. But what of one who has not experienced great tragedy? What

of one who was entirely happy and content? But romantic conceptions become not quite as elusive within winter walls.

And then there is an aloneness that comes only in the winter. But aloneness and loneliness are not the same: This aloneness feels saturated and inundated with smoothly tangled cigarette smoke, like the labyrinthine hesitancy of an angel's hair. It is the aloneness of sitting on a porch, watching the mist rise from the long grass, leaving the brittle frost to fend for itself. It is the aloneness of that one thought which no one else would understand, were it to be shared. You smile to yourself over your personal discovery of some new truth, but you cannot share it without receiving a nervous laugh or a blank stare in return. It is also the aloneness of that certain nearly indescribable feeling which might be contentment in disguise: to be alone and utterly un-lonely. The sky is harder in the winter, not at all like the soft velvet of the summer sky. It seems to be polished onyx, black and hard. Those silver stars are pieces of glass embedded in the onyx, and I fear that if a star did fall, it might cut me open. The winter sky is clarified, like turning up the magnification on a microscope. The sky itself seems farther from us in the winter, and *thus* it is clarified.

Winter is full of the low sounds of an iciclic near-dissonance. It is not summer with its jangle and shimmer, and it is not spring with its cool symphonies. It is not even autumn with its multi-colored harmonies. Winter is all minor key horns and harmonicas that send shivers down your spine. Winter is the tune that is at the same time both new and familiar. It is both numb and expectant.

And now my mind finds its way back again to the task at hand. It finds its way to the thoughts that chilled me in the first place. I am shaken from my momentary sabbatical and once again thinking now, only, of her. I do not know how long it has been, but it seems like I have been in this position of immobility for more than a few hours, knees locked in position and neck as if it had never moved. Her face appears in my head, surfacing in all the places we have been. I now know that if she were never to come back, I would be a prisoner. How can one visit the places where ghosts reside? And to do so willingly? To deliberately revisit the skeletons that hang neatly in your closet, like so many dusty Sunday suits? I do not think that such strength is within me. I feel that I would lay down and never rise. How easy it would be for a body to waste away, the metabolism slowly eating the fat and muscle from the inside out. But, perhaps, it would not be so easy. One's body does not give up so easily as one's mind. And maybe one's soul does not give up quite so easily as one's body.

The knocks (there are three) on my door erase all thought like the sun burning through a winter morning's mist. I rise, heart striking the inside of my chest (I can see my shirt rise and fall with each beat) and blood rushing to my brain. I walk to the door and turn the handle and: She is there, like the fulfillment of an intricate dream that one does not remember having until some word, some smell, some sound brings it all to the front of the mind, like waves crashing and breaking on black rocks.

FIRST ANNUAL THEMATIC ESSAY CONTEST

THANKS FOR THE GIFTS

REFLECTIONS OF THE EVALUATOR OF THE ESSAYS

The essays were judged for originality and impact. We have had a lot of reflection in the media about the aftermath of Sept. 11th. In the two essays I found moving insights and reactions that I hadn't heard already.

Another feature I appreciated in the two essays was their theme of self-criticism. They discovered a sense of the ironic in our personal and national reactions to the tumultuous events. The essays led me to self-reflection and even repentance, for which I am grateful.

Finally, I found the touches of mild sarcasm in the essays poetic and artistic. Harsh sarcasm leaves one with a feeling of distaste and resentment. This kind of mild sarcasm leaves one with a wry smile and admiring appreciation for an observation conveyed incisively.

Thanks, authors. I trust that you will continue to develop and share the special literary gift our Lord has clearly given you. You will bring wisdom and enjoyment to many people for many years to come.

Herb Hoefer
Division of Theology

Nov. 29, 2001

IT IS DEFINED AS A LACK OF EMOTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS

KATIE MARTEL

FIRST PLACE WINNER

I read the news clip on MSN, "N.Y., D.C. rocked by attacks": shock. I called my boyfriend, my mom: fear. I put clothes on and walked to my class: dream (nightmare). And then to my next class, and then to my boyfriend's room: all consuming apathy.

For a while I felt like I was a bit actor in some movie based on one of Tom Clancy's novels. Planes hijacked by terrorists don't run into the World Trade Center unless it's a movie and usually someone like Harrison Ford or Denzel Washington manages to miraculously outsmart the terrorists and saves the day and the plane lands safely in L.A. or San Francisco. But this wasn't a movie; people were actually dead, and I actually had to deal with the fact that life is a precarious, precious thing.

Except for the fact that I realized as the hours, days, and months passed I found it didn't really affect me. My original, irrational fears of World War III and massacred people lining the streets gave way to the daily worries and fears that plagued me even before the attack. Homework assumed its usual level of importance (if I don't get an "A" on such and such paper it will affect the outcome of the entire Universe). The little tiffs with my boyfriend did not cease (an argument over nothing at all can make my blood boil). Life resumed its normal pace and the events of September 11th left me unfazed. And disturbed.

Disturbed because homework is important but I only feign interest in world news. Disturbed because I've cried many tears on account of my boyfriend while I had to force myself to cry as I read the names of the dead who were on the flights. Disturbed because I'm not so abnormal that I can be the only one who feels this way. This absolute lack of emotion towards the events.

I hear stories of adults who still cry when they think about what happened. I read articles in *The Mercury* of people who have no sex drive as a result of the attacks. My mother had to take a sedative in order to take a cross-country flight to Boston. These are people in their mid twenties or later and I think they are reacting as perfectly normal human beings should. But what about this generation? The MTV generation. Generation Y. Whatever you would call us. Sure, I noticed that they turned off MTV in Elizabeth Hall to watch CNN for a few days. Yeah, we had a prayer service, once or twice. I see flags hung up in a few windows of East and Holman, a syrupy patriotic article in the newspaper. But for the most part, I've seen us sink into apathy.

And when I say us, I mean myself and those whom I talk to on a regular basis. And when I say apathy, I just mean that we stopped caring (if we ever did) 3 days after it happened and resumed life. Shouldn't we still be obsessed with what

happened? Isn't the day that Kennedy was shot engraved in every American's mind? My mother says, "I remember exactly what I was doing the day Kennedy was shot..." She was 13 years old. Life in America stopped. Everything. Hearts stopped beating. November 22, 1963.

September 11, 2001. Something appears so strange in my reaction. My heart did not cease beating. My life did not stop but for a second. I am 19, and I was asleep when it happened. Am I still asleep? Am I such a heartless beast that it doesn't seem to matter? That for only a tiny second of time did I realize the ramifications of what had occurred, the impact it had inflicted? That there is more anger in my heart towards the American government for what they are doing in Afghanistan than there ever was for whoever it was that attacked us?

There is a fear, a dread that surrounds this little, empty heart of mine as a result of the September 11th attack. It is not the fear of future attacks (I laugh at the thought of Anthrax meeting us here at Concordia University.). It is not the fear that the man I love may one day be forced to enlist in the army, to fight, to die in a war that could end in ... (only God knows what). I'm not fearful of stepping on a plane, nor do I partake in irrational, stereotypical fears for my safety when I see an Arabic Muslim on the street. My fear stems not from what occurred and what may soon occur, but instead from what these events have shown me about myself.

I could take the easy way out and say that I am a product of my generation. Can you really blame me? So many things seem to have gone wrong in our general upbringing; poorly funded education, far too much television, and many parents who just weren't there. But I refuse to simply be a product of my generation. I am different. This depression is different. Because something inside of me tells me that I should and must care about what has happened. That I should have cried when I found out. That I shouldn't continue to be so selfish in my worries about schoolwork and petty fights. No, I will not say I am not a product of my generation but I do believe that I am a reflection of their state. For all the terrible, fearful, dreadful things that the attacks of September 11th have shown us, perhaps the most disturbing is what is reflected in my heart, on this page. That behind the few who do care, there are many of us who have given up a reason to care. Who have lost the ability to feel.

A BRIGHTER AFTERMATH

ALLISON PIRIE

SECOND PLACE WINNER

In the weeks after America's most recent terrorist attacks, discussion focuses on them solely. It began with the "whos." Who's responsible for this? Whose jurisdiction is it to find the attackers? Who's going to help our nation? From this track it quickly jumped to the "what ifs." What if someone noticed the plotters? What if we'd elected Gore instead of Bush? What if the attacks happened later in the day? The terrorism conversation moves on discussing motives, anthrax, the Yankees, and recession. We talk about survivors, about percentages, about our degrees of separation from the attacks. However, our deliberation over the attacks has yet to focus on the "sinces."

Since September 11, our relation to the metropolis of New York has changed. Once revered for its status as the immigrant capital of the United States, New York has evolved into the news capital of the world. Except for the CNN center in Atlanta, every other major news syndicate is based in New York. The buildings in New York City have become icons for information. After the destruction of the World Trade Center's twin towers, the entire skyline changed. The fearless members of New York's finest are no longer indomitable. The friendly city captured in films like *Sleepless in Seattle*, *It Could Happen to You*, or *Keeping the Faith* has given way to a harsher, realistic city that's vulnerable and unfamiliar. Can this "new" New York City continue to inform a 21st century world? Alternatively, has the terrorism invoked the same kind of paranoia in our information capital that it hoped to disperse to our entire nation?

Since the news has begun focusing solely on terrorism, the energy crisis so prevalent on the west coast has all but ended. Suddenly with the destruction of the towers and the Pentagon, we all have enough power and no longer need to conserve. In actuality, there are no longer endangered species, the salmon population is larger than ever, and clear cutting has been found to benefit the environment. We no longer need to worry about shortages of any kind. We all share a common view on the abortion, cloning, and death penalty issues that used to separate us. We don't have to worry,; we're Americans. In fact, our car companies entice us to purchase by offering no interest loans. We're reminded to spend our tax rebates to boost the economy. However, half of the nationalism promoting signs, flags, and t-shirts are not even "made in America." What about the other controversies crowding our news before our fixation with Islamic fundamentalism began? They've all evidently solved themselves, packed up, and gone home.

Since the terrorist attacks, our country has experienced the kind of nationalism everyday that we typically only witness on Super Bowl Sunday. Everyday we're subjected to displays of our nation's flag whether it's in the window of a dusty foreign car or on a scantily clad, anorexic female. Every sound bite has the melody of a patriotic song in the background, reminding us that our flag is invincible; God likes the United States best and numerous other messages that would be controversial at any other time. Everyday people are attempting to remember more and more of their 5th grade American History classes in order to chat each other up while on public transportation and debate daily around the water cooler. We've learned more about Middle East geography in the past few months than during the years of the Persian Gulf War. We're as close as we've ever been nationally, but do we really know anyone better than before September 11?

Since the attacks, we're more familiar with one person now than ever before, God. God, in fact, is on our billboards, our headlines, our TV screens, and in our government. He is everywhere, including the original home we built for him, "church." In times of desperation, it appears okay for God to come and walk amongst His people again. It's okay to have a government built with a basis for religious acceptance and the separation of church and state to invoke God. Evidently, God is now at our command. We can keep Him in his little church box until we need Him and then unleash Him whenever things get too tough for us. Now He must "help us" and "bless us," not to mention take the blame when bad things happen, because He's God. Besides, we weren't really ignoring Him before; we just thought He liked it better alone in His box.

In all the turmoil and aftermath of the September 11 attacks, we've managed to become the nation we thought we always were. We solved our problems, we can ignore our differences, our days are collectively sunny, and our future is bright. Overnight we've organized relief efforts and the ever-fruitful benefit concerts. (Perhaps we should also organize regular attacks on our country to benefit the national well-being.) We've regained pride in our country and found God. Before September 11, we managed to become smug and inactive in a country that was founded on struggle and developed through strife. What would the forefathers of our country say to our newfound nationalism? They would probably just sigh and shake their heads at our complacency for a nation they fought to bring about.

THUMBS UP

(TO THE THIRD WORLD UPRISING--A PROGRESSION UNDONE)

MATT REICHERT

one.

fractured voice cracks into static and moves across a muted microphone
speaking a stifled revolution in the face of flame and damnation
while bodies fall from severed strings
cease-fire echoes in the ears of a nation realized.

and with their broken toys they make gods of men, to build up and destroy;
their impoverished royalty held still in the gallows of legislation.

two.

broken cardboard palaces expand in the hollowed shells of architectural waste
from which civilization breeds its platform:

to conquer and destroy the undergrowth of a freed individual.

and from the constructs of a lesson unlearned
the bombs are built to reanimate the machine of a free world
as the poor are fed to the very mechanisms they sought to destroy
baptizing the streets of a nation in blood.

DOES GOD HAVE WORDS FOR THIS?

NICOLE SLACK

Those eyes said it all.
Perfect stranger,
on 22nd and Pine among the
smell of stale exhaust,
every radio
playing the same thing
and his face said
“I don’t believe it,”
but his eyes
his tears said
“We are broken.”

Bad dream
bad joke-
no joke.
The next morning,
the scene remains.

It has sunk in.
Taken root.
I feel it scratch at my heart,
eat at my sense of reality
and bring me to my knees.

I am groping for a reason,
a logic,

an up and down.
But I am so
exhausted.
I try to write it off
as part of life,
part of this world.

The whole country
turns red
with anger,
white
with fear,
and blue
with patriotism.
“This is not over,”
says the person
in the radio
on the TV
in the streets.

As the giant is awoken
once again
we smile and say,
“May God have mercy on you,
because we will not.”

WHAT UNIVERSITY?

BENNETT TRACY HUFFMAN

“The task of a University is the creation of the future . . .”
--Alfred North Whitehead from “The Aim of Philosophy”

When I first began my graduate work in English at the University of Liverpool I initiated discussion with people concerning the actual purpose of a Humanities University. It seems to come down to the question of why study humanities at all. I started by having casual conversations with fellow students, and the lack of purpose expressed by my colleagues struck me profoundly.

At that time BBC radio aired a discussion about the purpose of universities in general. The piece identified a declining morale in a competitive world. Is education an urgent need? How does capitalism affect how we think about education; what about anti-corporate movements? Does education simply propagate elitist cultural values? Should education cross social classes? We should think through the purpose of higher education, and come up with an answer. Is universal knowledge reason enough? Should knowledge be sought for its own end? Is the purpose of college to train professionals with a narrow vocationalism and transferable skills? Has the marketing of the universities created a crisis? Should the University, like a medieval monastery, be a center for scholarship?

University education should be used to promote social equality. How do we actually do that? Why do students want peer and professor-student interaction? Is this a cultural industry? Are we in the same category as theater, music, and opera companies? Is this a teaching school? If so, what relationship exists between various departments and the education program at this University?

Years ago I turned to the statement of function in the Liverpool Humanities Graduate School newsletter. The ten objectives set out by the Director detail needs to encourage funding, research activity, resources, and training opportunities. As important as these aims might be, all are pertinent only to the running of the school and not directed to what the school’s actual purpose should be. When I asked a professor in the English Department what a humanities school should do I received the following response: “Teach cynicism; not so much as survival training for the contemporary world, but as philosophy — a way of believing one’s life should be lead.” Another member of the faculty, Dr. Ralph Pite, said, “Think twice. We should be teaching critical thinking as a life skill. In teaching literature exposure to the Horrible for people in their late teens and early twenties is important. Literature does that without having to show kids the mass graves.”

Lastly, I asked these questions of my parents, a social worker/nurse and a retired grade school teacher. They started me on a liberal education, in the first place. My mother said we should be contributing to the greater good by understanding anthropology, history and the human endeavor: "We study the humanities in order to have a better civilization; to be innovative, creative and not trite. Heads of state, diplomats should be trained in humanities in order to understand the interfacing and interacting of geopolitical groups. In the information age critiquing sources of information is of the utmost importance." My late father said that an education school should be training future teachers. He also said that nothing changes without an idea.

So are we in the revolution business? There seems to be some range of responses to the question of the purpose of a liberal arts University. I am not sure we all must possess the same reason for being here, but in light of this broad range of responses, and in light of recent important events, I am certain that we should be talking to one another formally and informally about why we are here and where we are going with it.

THE SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY:
THE CASE SUMMARILY STATED
PROFESSOR DANIEL WRIGHT

Who wrote the works of Shakespeare? Tradition tells us that the author was a tradesman from provincial Warwickshire who was baptized Gulielmus Shakspere, a man who never had a day's schooling, and yet we are told—and are expected to believe—that in his twenties, this man began to publish (having written *nothing* before in the whole of his life!) the most erudite works of literature the world has ever seen. We are told by traditionalists that this man (who literally could not spell his own name the same way twice) wrote poems and plays that are dense in their reliance upon the literature of classical antiquity as well as Continental verse and narrative that had not even been translated into English in Shakespeare's day. We are told that this man who never owned so much as a single book wrote, without any education and apprenticeship in the literary and dramatic arts, poems and plays that invoke the names and legends of hundreds of figures from Greek and Roman mythology—poems and plays that demonstrate the writer's easy familiarity with and competence in Latin, Greek, Italian and French—poems and plays demonstrative, moreover, of a linguistic facility so agile and confident that the writer sometimes would compose large sections of his work in a language other than English (as one observes when one reads *Henry the Fifth*, for example).

When, where and from whom did this man—who never traveled farther than London from his hometown or studied so much as a day in any kind of school; who was compelled to marry in haste when, as a teenager, he got an older woman pregnant; who reputedly worked as a butcher's apprentice in the market town of Stratford-Upon-Avon; and who never wrote anything before he abandoned his wife and family to live in London—supposedly learn all of this? How was it that he appeared in London, suddenly and with no preparation, like a genie from a lamp, a cultivated, accomplished and knowledgeable scholar of his own and other nations' literatures, histories, customs, painting, sculpture, intimately versed in the history of the English aristocracy as well as the character of many ages' and nations' political and religious disputes? Where did he study and master English case law, Continental civil law and learn the arcane jargon of aristocratic sport and military command if all he did for the first half of his life was chop meat in a provincial burg of perhaps forty families' size?

Can anyone truly think the scenario likely? Is this—a *process that defies everything we know about the development of literary creativity and skill*—a credible explanation of how Shakespeare came to his craft? Are we seriously to believe that a man of no education, who had no journeyman experience in the literary arts, no

apprenticeship or tutelage in the classics, no foundation in law, music, politics, theology, aristocratic sport or courtly custom—would sit down in his mid-twenties and in his *first* foray into writing compose the works of *Shakespeare*? Would such a man—the world’s greatest wordsmith and lover of language—not have taught his own family to read and write rather than leave them illiterate? Would the only apparently literate member of his family (his son-in-law) praise, in print, fellow Warwickshire poet Michael Drayton but never write a line acknowledging that his *own father-in-law* was England’s most famous poet-dramatist (or even a *writer*)? Would this Shakespeare not have been feted and received tributes like his peers—rather than fail to be acknowledged as a poet or playwright of any kind by anyone, in his own lifetime, in their letters, memorandae, literary dedications or diary entries?

If the writer who called himself Shakespeare were *this* man from Stratford-Upon-Avon, he is the most improbable person ever to have lived, and his story is the most improbable in history—one that, as Professor Steven Steffens of Concordia University has demonstrated, utterly defies rational explanation. In point of fact, however, this man from Stratford-Upon-Avon—whom no literary figure in his own day acknowledged even as an acquaintance, and from whom no one ever received so much as a mere letter—was not the author of the works that bear the name of William Shakespeare (a name, it is worth noting, that the man from Stratford himself never used). Rather, the author of these incomparable plays and poems, almost certainly, was Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England—a brilliant court poet and playwright who was a cousin to the Queen and the son-in-law of her principal minister of state, William Cecil, the first Baron Burghley.

Unlike the butcher from Stratford, Edward de Vere was nurtured in the arts of poetry and stagecraft from his youth. He grew up in the home of the man who had the largest library in England (larger even than the library, at the time, of Cambridge University). He was tutored by England’s finest scholars; he was multilingual, a fluent speaker and writer of Latin, Italian and French. He was extensively traveled on the Continent, especially in France and Italy. He received graduate degrees from both Oxford University and Cambridge University. He matriculated at Gray’s Inn, one of the revered Inns of Court and—not incidentally—one of the principal sites of theatrical performance in late sixteenth-century London. He created lavish entertainment for the Queen and her court, was a patron of writers and playwrights, and he held the lease to the Blackfriar’s Theatre, the principal private theatre in London. He was an acclaimed poet and playwright in his own time, owned an estate on the Avon, and was hailed as a man whose “countenance shakes a spear” by Gabriel Harvey. He was recognized as the foremost writer of his age by Henry Peacham, declared the “most excellent” of all Elizabethan court poets by William Webbe, acclaimed “the best for Comedy” by Francis Meres, and

acknowledged by George Puttenham as the *best* of those Elizabethan writers at court who, he declared, were publishing *without appending their own names to their works*.

Oxford also received a host of literary dedications that distinguished him as pre-eminent among writers of the Elizabethan Age; Angel Day, for example, hailed him as a man “sacred to the Muses”; Edmund Spenser praised him in *The Fairie Queene*, and John Brooke congratulated Cambridge University for its special recognition and commendation of Oxford’s “rare learning.” By contrast, to the man who supposedly brought the Renaissance to England—Will Shakspeare of Stratford-Upon-Avon—no one in his own lifetime ever dedicated a thing. Moreover, when Stratford Will died, he was buried in a grave that did not even bear his name, and his passing was not marked with any of the mourning and ceremony that attended the passing of far less notable (and now all-but-forgotten) writers of the day.

The case for Edward de Vere as the pseudonymous author of the Shakespeare canon, of course, is one that requires more than a few summary statements for an adequate presentation. Massive and detailed scholarly investigations by some of America’s, Canada’s and Britain’s best scholars are available for study by those who may wish to join efforts to attain a definitive resolution of the Shakespeare Authorship Question in order to impart to the real author of Shakespeare the long-neglected distinction that is his due. Moreover, to the pursuit of this end, there is the international convocation of scholars that gathers each April to explore and share the latest research on the Authorship Question at Concordia University’s Edward de Vere Studies Conference, to which all who are interested in seeing this question debated, studied and resolved are invited.

ESSENTIALLY NOTHING

NATE BACA

Let dark days of rain
Wash the majestic dust
From your winged words.
Let them plummet,
Fluttering like moths alive,
But no longer able to fly.
Watch them writhe upon the ground –
Pain until they cease.
Watch them wither into dust
That once gave them flight.
Now useless without life,
Now essential without form.

SUMMER STILL-LIFE

TIM WINTERSTEIN

I felt the periwinkle sky grow solemn
In the twin mirrors of your dark eyes;
Feels like a velvet summer sky.

I saw the impudent breeze move impatiently through
The side-car silhouette of your brazen hair;
Looks like a seven-fold summer breeze.

And I let rose petals fall soft upon your skin
Like elegant ink-blot spots of blood;
Your love has the feel of sweet innocence
In a dry world of dust and rotting wood.

Hear the sparkle and shimmer of ancestral summer stars
As they appear above, one by one,
They are the million eyes of God.
And the moon is a sideways smile, shedding crooked
Light upon a day undone.

Thundershowers like joy wash down the street
And, with a glance, perchance we'll meet
Underneath the fragrant heat.

TWO ASTRINGENT FRIENDS

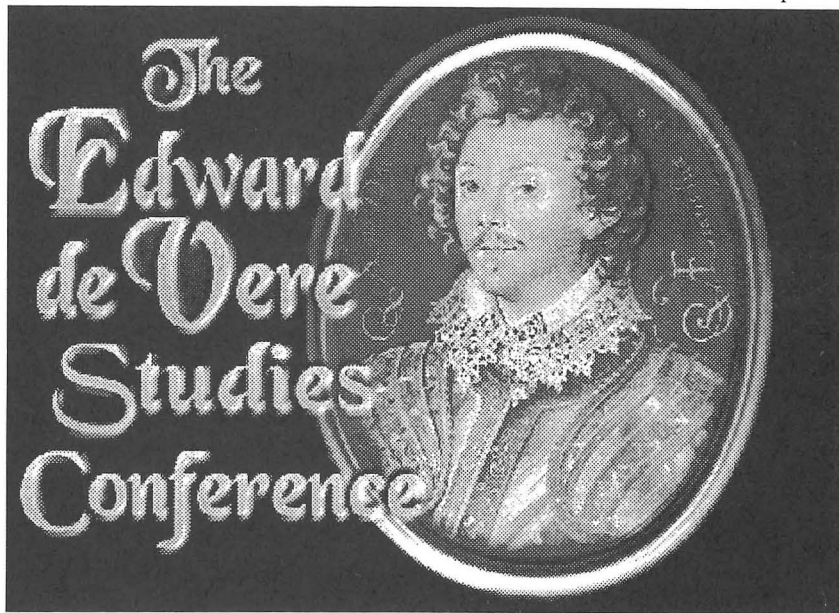
JENNIFER SMITH

I will bring the pistachios,
And you will bring the wine.
And with a smile and a joke
We'll do our best to choke
Down the tongues on which we dine.
We can't unbitter the poison,
Though God knows we'll try
Though this is a race
We'll walk at the same pace
So dying will be a tie.
"One last toast my friend"
You said in a voice so low.
I heard the lie
And wasn't surprised,
So whispered correcting, "my foe."
We handed each other a cup
And we drank to each other's best.
And we fell to the floor,
Knowing what's more,
We drank to each other's death.

THE UPPER HOUSE

JENNIFER SMITH

I saw them,
Shaking their yellow heads at me
And slowly swinging their arms.
They bobbed and swayed,
So gracefully.
They danced,
Without the benefit of feet.
And they caught my heart
Tore it apart,
Without the benefit of teeth.



Concordia University Portland Oregon

April 11 ~ 14, 2002

The Edward de Vere Studies Conference is the world's largest convocation of scholars to gather annually, at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, to share new research on the life and works of Elizabethan court poet and playwright, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. The conference is especially dedicated to the presentation of scholarly research.

We invite all to attend who are interested in exploring the circumstances that led to the creation and publication of the Shakespeare canon. Registrations can be submitted at any time, but registration for each conference is limited to 180 persons, so register soon for assured seating.

For more information please contact

Dr. Daniel Wright, Director
The Edward de Vere Studies Conference
Concordia University
2811 NE Holman
Portland, OR 97211-6099

<http://www.deverestudies.org>

The exclusive right to reproduce the Hilliard portrait of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is extended to the Edward de Vere Studies Conference by the kind permission of His Grace, the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, KT, VRD

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LEIGH-ANNE STOHL (cover artist) is a Sophomore Biology Major. Drawing is a way to lose yourself and find yourself all at the same time. "In this drawing I lost myself and found the presence of God."

TIM WINTERSTEIN, Senior in Pre-Seminary program. "I'd like to dedicate my work to the glory of God and to my wife Tennille. Psalm 19."

DANIEL WRIGHT is Professor of English at Concordia University. He is the author of the acclaimed book, *The Anglican Shakespeare*, and over three dozen scholarly articles and reviews in publications such as the German-language *Neues Shakespeare Journal*, *Studies in the Novel*, *The Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, *Renaissance and Reformation*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, *The Elizabethan Review*, *The Oxfordian* and *Harper's*. He is also director of the Edward de Vere Studies Conference, held annually at Concordia University.

ANNE WOODWARD, Freshman, has recently "faked her own death in order to pursue the dream of the recluse."

